DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 437 862 HE 032 623

AUTHOR	Rochin, Refugio I.
TITLE	Organizing for Survival: A Professor's Guide to Tenure and Increased Productivity. ISRI Occasional Paper No. 27. Latino Studies Series.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Julian Samora Research Inst.
PUB DATE	1997-08-00
NOTE	11p.; Paper originally presented at the Annual Scholars Roundtable of the Midwest Consortium for Latino Research (2nd, East Lansing, MI, August 1995).
AVAILABLE FROM	Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 112 Paolucci Building, East Lansing, MI 48824-1110. Tel: 517-432-1317; Fax: 517-432-2221. For full text: http://www.jsri.msu.edu.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Development; *College Faculty; Higher Education; Organization; *Tenure

ABSTRACT

Professors can improve their chances of earning tenure by paying attention to organizing certain areas of their professional lives. Evidence of teaching effectiveness, professional and community service, research and other creative activities needs to be gathered and presented in a clear manner at faculty review proceedings. Good organizational skills, thoughtful planning, mentoring, and strategic production of research can all help to enhance an individual's portfolio and aid survival in academe. (JM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 437 862

JSRI Occasional Paper No. 27
Latino Studies Series

Organizing for Survival: A Professor's Guide to Tenure and Increased Productivity

by Refugio I. Rochin
Director and Professor, Michigan State University

Occasional Paper No. 27
August 1997

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☛ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. HINOJOSA
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Julian Samora Research Institute
Michigan State University • 112 Paolucci Building
East Lansing, MI 48824-1110
Phone (517) 432-1317 • Fax (517) 432-2221
Home Page: www.jsri.msu.edu

HE 032 623

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Organizing for Survival:
A Professor's Guide to Tenure and Increased Productivity

by Refugio I. Rochin
Director and Professor, Michigan State University

Occasional Paper No. 27
August 1997

This paper was originally presented before the Second Annual Scholars Roundtable of the Midwest Consortium for Latino Research in August, 1995 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Mich.

About the Author: Refugio I. Rochin

Dr. Refugio I. Rochín, Director of the Julian Samora Research Institute, is Professor of Agricultural Economics and Sociology at Michigan State University and Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Davis. His research interests include multicultural studies, immigration/migration issues, farmworkers, and rural populations. He received his M.A. in Communication and his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Michigan State University. He has directed JSRI since Fall 1994.

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

SAMORA RESEARCH INSTITUTE
JULIAN

Julian Samora Research Institute
Refugio I. Rochín, Director
Danny Layne, Layout Editor

SUGGESTED CITATION

Rochín, Refugio I. *Organizing for Survival: A Professor's Guide to Tenure and Increased Productivity.* JSRI Occasional Paper #27, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1997.

The **Julian Samora Research Institute** is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest. To this end, it has organized a number of publication initiatives to facilitate the timely dissemination of current research and information relevant to Latinos.

* *Research Reports:* **JSRI**'s flagship publications for scholars who want a quality publication with more detail than usually allowed in mainstream journals. These are edited and reviewed in-house. Research Reports are selected for their significant contribution to the knowledge base of Latinos.

* *Working Papers:* for scholars who want to share their preliminary findings and obtain feedback from others in Latino studies. Some editing provided by **JSRI**.

* *Statistical Briefs/CIFRAS:* for the Institute's dissemination of "facts and figures" on Latino issues and con - ditions. Also designed to address policy questions and to highlight important topics.

* *Occasional Papers:* for the dissemination of speeches and papers of value to the Latino community which are not necessarily based on a research project. Examples include historical accounts of people or events, "oral histories," motivational talks, poetry, and related presentations.

Organizing for Survival:
A Professor's Guide to Tenure and Increased Productivity

Table of Contents

Introduction *1*

The Context: What Makes for Success? *1*

The Message *2*

Functions Wherein Organization Can Improve Academic Survival *3*

Checklist: Things to Consider *4*

Taking Action *5*

Other Topics for Survival *6*

The author, Dr. Refugio I. Rochin, at work in his Michigan office.

Organizing for Survival:
A Professor's Guide to Tenure and Increased Productivity

Introduction

Webster's defines survival as the act of enduring adverse or unusual circumstances; especially those conditions derived from ancient custom, observance, belief, or the like. In short, survival means sustaining a person's existence in traditional settings like ours.

My presentation, "organizing for survival in academe" is about ways to endure adverse circumstances facing junior professors, especially those who are pre-tenure. It is about academic survival for those of us who hope to have years and years being a professor in higher education.

I realize that tenure, per se, is not our ultimate end. For most scholars, more important pursuits include learning, experimenting, sharing, teaching, publishing, developing communities and mentoring students. Moreover, I believe we all ultimately like to be known as creative scholars, i.e., persons who can teach something new to students, and can add value to science and society. Nonetheless my concern is pure and simple: i.e. assuring academic survival in an environment that is full of challenges, opportunities, and, to a degree, adversity.

What if we can't find time for what we want to achieve? What if we seem to be stressed, rushed, absent minded, unproductive, and sometimes pressured by others? What if we can't get our lectures, articles, speeches and committee activities straightened out and ready for action? What if our research gets bogged down and unpublished? Would we be able to survive academe? Would we get tenure? Would we have a fulfilling life as a professor? I doubt it. And if we don't fulfill our life long ambition of becoming creative scholars, who will care and who will we blame? These are difficult questions and everyone here, I am sure, can offer advice, suggestions, and counsel on all of these questions.

For my part, I can assure you that there is no comprehensive formula for academic survival, productivity, or "tenure." Academic survival differs for each and every professor in higher education. Some become tenured by highly effective teaching and good rapport in their departments. Some become tenured by playing effective political roles and building influential networks in their field. Some become tenured by the sheer volume of peer reviewed articles. All in all, I believe that most become tenured by doing a combination of the above.

Although there is no precise formula for enhanced teaching, publication, and tenure, there are some basic things to be done. There are ways to get organized. There are methods and techniques for doing more. There are "how to" books and guidelines for promotion and tenure.

The Context: What Makes for Success?

In order to share my experience, I will begin by "contextualizing" some of the reasons I have for emphasizing "organizing for survival."

1) I have been a professor for more than 25 years, gaining tenure and full professor status at the University of California, Davis (in Agricultural and Resource Economics and Chicana/o Studies) and Michigan State University (in Agricultural Economics and Sociology).

2) I have mentored over 50 Ph.D.s and Post-Docs, mostly while in the University of California system. In addition, I have worked closely with over 100 different professors, most of whom were tenured to begin with, but many who were junior professors. I have a sense of what "worked" for them in their career advancement.

3) I have reviewed well over 100 academic cases for advancement and tenure of whom about 50 were minority scholars.

4) I have seen over a dozen Latinos/as denied tenure and too many turned down from academic appointments of their choice.

My experience leads me to two general conclusions:

1) Of all who have achieved satisfaction in academics and earned tenure, there is something in common. Basically, all the tenured have well organized "portfolios," that is, evidence, "products," and strategies that contain a substantiated mix of publications, effective teaching, some unusual service in their professional spheres, good letters from other scholars, and discipline and order in their lives. I say "products" in terms of producing some measurable or valued goods. I can also say that rarely is a case for tenure supported unanimously. There are almost always dissenting opinions against tenure.

2) Of all who have been denied tenure, there is much less commonality. The faculty who have been turned down tend to have scattered, and inconsistent portfolios of a lot of different things. There is less focus on coherent themes of academic achievement. The person's packet of performance tends to show a lot of wide ranging activity, none of it particularly strong in a specific area. There are questionable "products" in the portfolio which are difficult to value.

Now, for all of you who have been tenured and for you here who feel secure, I will say congratulations. Also, I hope you would take particular note of what I will say next and correct me if I am too far-fetched. But for persons in our audience who feel less secure and uncertain about survival, let me proceed with my words of advice.

The Message

Basically, I have two brief expressions to say about survival: first, "**Get Organized**" in terms of teaching, research and service, and second, "**Know Your Academic Unit**" well enough in order to put your priorities and promotion materials together in a way that adds value.

"Getting organized" is my principle key for academic survival. "Knowing your academic unit" is the concomitant key for getting organized and the way for prioritizing your actions and materials. Of course, as an economist, I presume all of you work hard, want to succeed and will do what you can to optimize your chances for survival. That's a given for rational thinkers in a modern environment. Accepting you as rational thinkers who want to get the most value from your work, I have few doubts of your wisdom, intelligence and academic prowess. In other words, I am not going to challenge your intelligence, freedom of choice and your system for allocating your time and resources.

However, from the experience I mentioned above, I have noticed far too many cases of junior scholars who don't produce as much as they can, who seemingly invest too much unproductive time in talk and "busy-looking" activity in their offices, especially clearing e-mail from all kinds of list serve mailings. I have witnessed faculty who get "lost" so-to-speak in the maelstrom of academe. Here are some select examples of what I perceive as busy work with little promotional value:

1) When I chaired a graduate program of Community Development, I encountered professors who talked a good spirited game of community activities, but who had little documentation or record of what they were doing. There were few notes that showed effective learning and participant observation. They often argued that they were too busy with real life undertakings to substantiate their observations and claims that they were helping others.

2) When I chaired committees for faculty review and promotion, I was dismayed to find colleagues who could not produce a recent resume or even full sets of their papers and publications. They often gave me the impression that it was my duty as chair to produce their supporting materials.

3) In areas of teaching, it was difficult for faculty to produce a copy of their course syllabus and worse yet, their student evaluations. They didn't seem to appreciate the importance of showing what they teach and the effectiveness of their teaching records as part of their peer review.

4) In reviewing articles of peers for publication, I have found it surprising when the authors have omitted full citations of references and, much worse, when the authors could not find the full article they were citing. That's because they didn't keep the reference or they did not record their notes.

5) Students have confided in me that some professors give poor, disjointed, loosely connected lectures, that they cannot follow the train of thought of the professor. More importantly to me, the same students have commented that they did not feel comfortable asking such professors for letters of recommendation. It is easy to understand why. But then again, disorganized, poor lecturers, are not supported by their students for tenure decisions. Students will give negative teaching evaluations to confusing, unorganized lecturers, even if they like the professor as a person.

6) Finally, I have shown you some pictures of offices at Michigan State University. These photos are actual snapshots taken of different offices. Each shows a different organizing system, or lack of an apparent system.

The point I wish to make is that faculty should be able to locate and produce what they need. They should have a system and means for addressing conditions I just mentioned. Another point is that a faculty member would be better served if that professor organized in terms of what counts in the academic unit. Good teaching counts, for example.

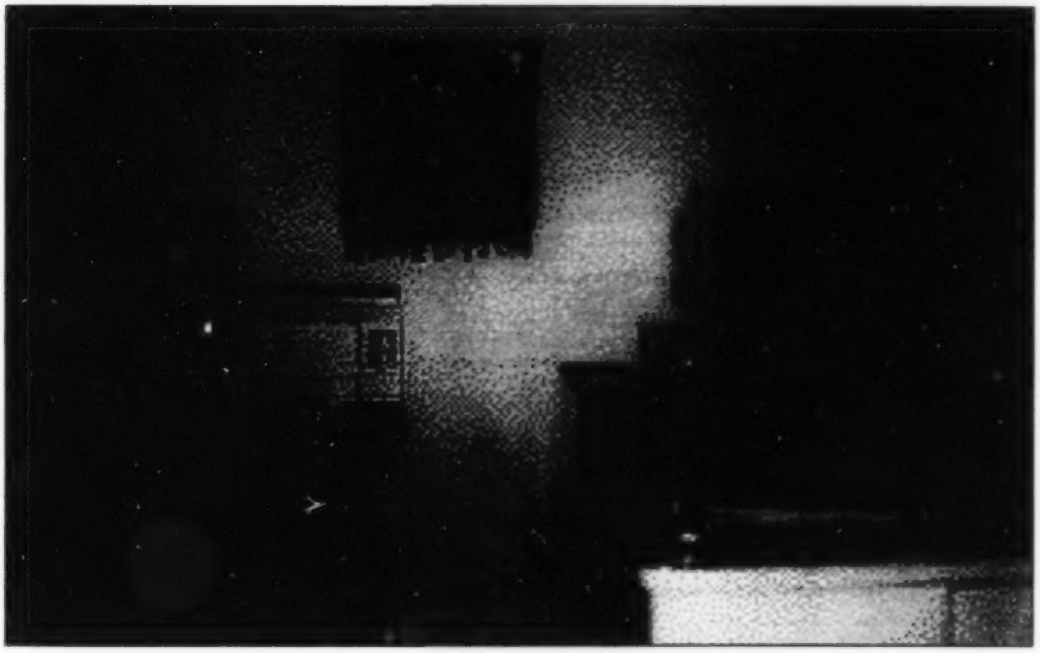
Now, what if all or most of these poor traits applied to you? What if your student evaluations were poor? What if your office was indicative of your situation? Does that mean you won't get tenure? Absolutely not. But, in general, you would be fighting an up-hill battle to get the respect you seek and the results that are expected from you in terms of being a productive scholar. Coincidentally, the professor with the messy office is tenured. The professor with the piles of paper can find things.

Nonetheless, I believe the best advice I can give junior faculty is to organize their academic lives, their office, their files, their notes, their calendar, their books, their references, their lectures, and to a degree, their free time. Likewise, they should learn to prioritize their activities.

Functions Wherein Organization Can Improve Academic Survival

There are all kinds of activities and functions where a professor can get better organized. The following list provides a breakdown of the most important areas for organization. In general, there are three traditional activities for which faculty are judged for performance.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



1) ***Teaching***
Do you do any or all of the following?
How do you document these?

- Departmental Teaching
- University Teaching (Lectures)
- Informal Extension Education Work
- Curriculum Development
- Supervising Teaching Assistants/Interns
- Advising Undergraduate Students
- Advising Graduate Students
- Professional Development: Helping Peers
- Distance Teaching, Films

2) ***Research and Creative Activity***
Do you keep a record of the following?

- Seeking Financial Support (RFPs)
- Conducting Research/Joining Teams
- Writing/Presenting/Publishing
- Creating/Preparing an Artistic Work
- Exhibiting/Presenting/Performing the Work
- Professional Advising/Consulting
- Movies, Art, Music, Designs
- Grants and Contracts, Budgets
- Student Assistants, Post-Docs
- Reviewing Publications

3) ***Service***
If these make sense, can you document your role in the following?

- Professional Service, Panelist, Reviewer
- Institutional Service/Volunteerism
- Community Service/Outreach
- Changes you were involved in
- University-Community Relations
- Writing Reviews of Books, Programs and Projects (may be Creative works!)
- Writing Letters of Recommendation
- Mentoring, Recruitment, Advising

Checklist: Things to Consider

The above list still begs the question, namely: how do we get all these activities organized? Here I present a checklist of things you can do with your office and home collections:

1) ***Check and/or Evaluate Your Office Organization***

a) *Identify Problems in:*
- Findings things
- Keeping dates
- Creating space for new items
- Maintaining and/or updating documents
- Setting Priorities

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

b) *Consider Ways to Enhance:*
- Professional commitments and activities
- High priority functions/projects (those that count academically)
- Files and records, accounts
- Inventory needs
- Office space, aesthetics
- Ethnographics, participant observations
- Student evaluations, evaluations you make of students
- Calendars and schedules

2) ***Some Beginning Steps***
After (1), reflect on the following

a) What help do you need to get organized?
b) Identify tasks to get done by priority
c) Identify strengths in your current system of organization
d) Identify "obstacles" to your performance and organization
e) Find new ideas and resources for organizing
f) Develop a log of important observations, lessons learned (for example, follow some of the methods used by ethnographers for recording information.)
g) Employ file folders, drawers, and databases
h) Assess ways to save space
i) Keep a free work space for priority items

3) ***Want to Stay Focused? (tongue-in-cheek!)***
Hum to yourself the following

a) "I know what I could be doing."
b) "I am doing what I should be doing."
c) "I am being rewarded for what I am doing."
d) "I am in control of my work and life."

Taking Action

Realizing that you face constant demands, adversity, and high expectations of faculty, take time and invest in organizing ways to address the constant challenges of keeping up and getting ahead; keep fresh and renewed.

Here are some more pointers:

1) ***Plan Ahead***

a) Make time to develop and sharpen your organizational skills — work to gain additional perspectives about priorities
b) Create an office plan and prioritize tasks
- Set up your files
- Computerize your records and always update
- Get ideas from others on how to stay in control.

c) Effectively organize these areas
- Calendars
  daily, weekly, yearly activities
- Teaching
  files, curriculum materials, notebooks
- Ongoing research
  organize your references, sources, data
- Potential research
  plan new space for ideas
- Students, assistants, and Post-Docs
  computerize records, log evaluations
- Committee/general meetings
  log your role, "measure change"

2) ***Think Positive — Act with Motivation***

- Organize for fun and speed.
- See how others organize in your unit, get ideas from them.
- Develop new aspects of your work every day.
- Add beauty and aesthetics

3) ***Find Balance***

- Keep the professional and personal in perspective.
- Protect time for your interests.
- Schedule time for fun.
- Make work fun and interesting

Other Topics for Survival

In closing, while I believe we can enhance our chances for academic survival by applying more concerted organizing principles, I would be remiss if I ignored other topics for academic tenure. Basically, give attention to the following factors of your academic unit:

1) The Need for Academic Socialization

Consider the significance and implications of inter-departmental meetings and consultations. Find ways to be inclusive in your academic setting. See the socialized systems for getting along. Figure the best ways for working with others.

2) The Role of Mentoring and Politicization

Consider the importance of contacts, protection, promotion and access to decision makers, funds and publishing circles. Mentoring is more than advising or being advised by senior faculty. Mentoring is "having a partner" on your side; a person who will defend, promote and correct your actions with due regard for your academic and professional future.

3) Strategic Production of Research

Consider the potential benefits and pay-offs from focusing on research that is published in quick order versus that "classic" article. Aim to produce quality research but also aim to have a steady line of regular reports and articles. A classic article is always a plus, but waiting and waiting until you produce such a piece is a perilous way to go in academe. Grantsmanship is also a plus. Build funds and resources for your research and make sure you develop funds for employing excellent students.

4) Collaborative Peer Review Networks

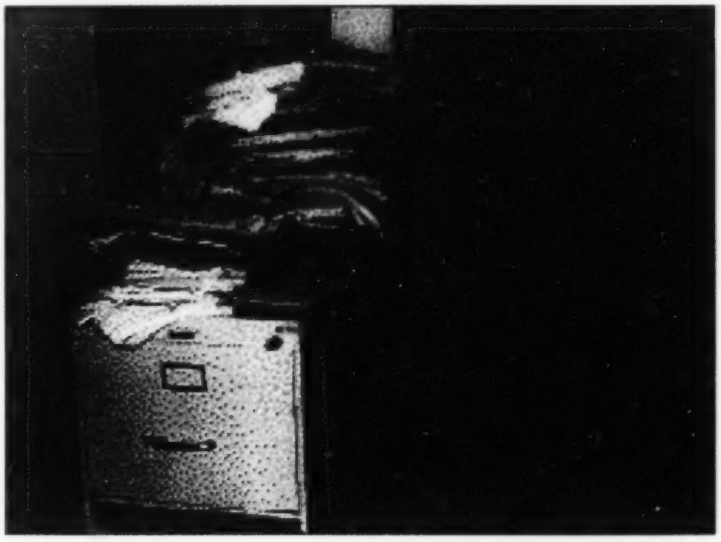
Consider the rationale for peer review and the methods that have been used to link faculty to "winning teams." Simply put, peer review should be considered a plus in academe; a way to get feedback that improves your research. Enhance your networks and collaborative exchanges/linkages. Know who is doing what and where in relation to your line of research and feel comfortable exchanging ideas. Research in isolation limits your effective range of collaboration.

5) Monitoring Performance Measures and Indicators

Consider ways of documenting your performance and advancing in academic areas that count the most towards tenure. Learn how to set standards and how to "measure up." Simply put, if you know what counts in your promotion, then make sure you have some or all of those things in your package.

Finally, keep in touch with me; let me know what works. <http://www.jsri.msu.edu>

Thank you.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE